

Who Owns Mexico?

[By Robert M. LaFollette, in LaFollette's Magazine.]

The plain citizen has no determining voice on the issue of war or peace.

For more than fifty years money has been powerful enough to force war upon any country at any time. The student of world politics will find that practically all modern wars have been dictated by great financial interests.

As long as capital finds its best field for profit in its own country, the peace of that country is reasonably secure. But whenever the financial interests have acquired such a control of the national resources of their own country and such mastery over the industrial and commercial affairs of their own people that they can exact profits at will, such interests seek new fields for their surplus capital.

This excess capital which has been ground out of an exploited country and its people—if retained at home—would reduce interest; and farmers, merchants and small business enterprises could borrow upon reasonable rates.

But the masters of finance consider little else besides their own profits.

The people of the United States do not want war with Mexico. The Mexican people do not want war with us. And both President Wilson and Carranza have manifestly done everything in their power to avert war.

What is it, then, that menaces the peace of these neighboring countries?

It dates far back of the Columbus raid. That outrage upon the residents of one of our border towns was the logical outcome of conditions for which the Mexican people were in no wise responsible. Worse than that! The Mexican people were really innocent victims of traitors in our midst. For it is charged upon the highest authority that the raid was inspired and arranged for in our own country!

Do you get the full meaning of that statement? Benedict Arnold was not more guilty of treason.

The secret service of this government has a long arm and a strong arm. The net may yet be drawn on the "higher-up." It is fair to assume that President Wilson did not

disclose all of the facts in his possession when he declared officially a few days after the raid that—

"There were persons along the border actively engaged in creating friction between the governments of the United States and the de facto government of Mexico for the purpose of bringing about intervention in the interest of certain owners of Mexican properties."

There you have it! The gentlemen who want war with Mexico are the gentlemen who "have Mexican properties." They are a very powerful lot. They own most of the United States and a good big slice of Mexico. They are our captains of industry; our masters of finance. They own or control our great newspapers. They are for a "strong Mexican policy," a "strong foreign policy," a big army, a big navy.

They prate about "patriotism." They clamor for "preparedness." They have tried to plunge the country into a hysteria of fear that we are going to be thrown into war with Germany or England or Japan. They have congress "on the run."

These privileged interests are not taxing the people of the United States for their great army and navy scheme to fight Germany, England or Japan. They have other plans for the present. They have the irons on the American people. They control the prices of labor and the products of labor. They control the cost of every necessary of life. They own the coal, the oil, the timber, the water powers. Their profits are so enormous that they must lower interest rates or else—invest in foreign countries. The timber, oil, coal and mineral wealth of Mexico and of the Central and South American countries are most inviting in every way. The governments are poor; the labor is cheap as slave labor.

There is just one risk. And that is a large risk. The governments are most of them weak. Revolutions in many of them are frequent; property rights are insecure.

But a scheme has been worked out by the masters of finance to make foreign investments as good as a government bond. Just put the Stars and Stripes back of them!

There was a time when the slogan of munition makers was: "Trade follows the Flag." That put the commercial interests behind the navy. But—"new needs, new deeds." That slogan has been completely reversed. The cry now is: "The Flag follows the investment."

We will protect our citizens abroad. Assuredly! That is our bounden duty, if we are to uphold the standing and dignity of our government among the other nations of the world—strong or weak. But, if the protection of "citizens" were our only concern, there would be no "border raids," no "mobilization," no "war talk." There would be no occasion for the clouds that darken so many American homes today. "Investments," in these plutocratic times, are vastly more important than "citizens." And it is not to protect "citizens" but to protect "investments" that our boys in khaki have been forced into action. That is the truth of it.

These American "investors" in Mexico—millionaires—are using every instrument they can control—their money, their newspapers, their magazines, their political influence, all their "dark and devious ways,"—to bring about "intervention." Intervention means war. War means blood, and killing, and bereaved families, and unmentionable horrors. And all for what? Profits! Privilege profits!

Privilege exploits us folks here in our own United States. And Priv-

ilege makes so much money out of us that it creates a huge surplus. Privilege, never satiated, wants this surplus to be at work bringing in still more profits. Weak, and undeveloped (and unexploited!) countries offer the biggest returns. So Privilege buys a foreign "concession." Cheap! The system looks to that bargain! But, to maintain the great profits, it is ordinarily necessary to resort to "strong arm" methods. Sometimes people (like the workers in the mining districts of Colorado, Michigan, and West Virginia) resist oppression and exploitation. Machine guns become the order of the day. And, after all, our present "Mexican situation" is only a "Ludlow" on a bigger scale. Privilege is today trying to shape public sentiment, so that "our boys" shall be made to march down into Mexico and offer up their lives—for the purpose of placing the guarantee of the United States government behind those gold mines and other concessions, and to make the profits of Privilege secure.

Who owns Mexico? Really owns it?

Let us glance at a few figures. Dollars, they are—millions and millions of them. And they tell the story. What follows shows the wealth of Mexico, according to nationality of ownership. It is taken from the United States consular report No. 168 issued July 18, 1912, by Consul Marion Letcher of Chihuahua. This table was prepared by William H. Seamon, late of Chihuahua who, according to the statement of this consular report "has had long experience in Mexico as a mining engineer."

Nationality	Amount of Investment
American	\$1,057,770,000
English	321,302,800
French	143,446,000
Mexican	793,187,242
Other Nations	118,535,380

Hold fast to these figures. Whatever may be urged upon you in these trying times by way of justifying "intervention," keep in mind this big, outstanding fact:

American financiers have more money invested in Mexico than the Mexicans themselves have — \$264,582,758 more.

American investments are biggest of all in that unhappy, system-ridden country.

This American money is found in railroad stocks and bonds, mines, national bonds, ranches, smelters, timber lands, factories, oil, rubber, insurance, and other enterprises.

Let us glance at a few more figures from the same authority:

Railway stocks—Mexican money invested, \$125,440,000; American money invested, \$235,464,000.

Railway bonds—Mexican money invested, \$12,275,000; American money invested, \$408,926,000.

Mines—Mexican money invested, \$7,500,000; American money invested, \$223,000,000.

National bonds—Mexican money invested, \$21,000,000; American money invested, \$52,000,000.

Smelters—Mexican money invested, \$7,200,000; American money invested, \$26,500,000.

Timber lands—Mexican money invested, \$5,600,000; American money invested, \$8,100,000.

Factories (Miscellaneous) — Mexican money invested, \$3,270,000; American money invested, \$9,600,000.

Oil — Mexican money invested, \$650,000; American money invested, \$15,000,000.

Rubber—Mexican money invested, \$4,500,000; American money invested, \$15,000,000.

Insurance — Mexican money invested, \$2,000,000; American money invested, \$4,000,000.

In the ownership of Mexico we

find the real menace to the peace between Mexico and the United States. American capitalists are desperately attempting to have the flag follow their investments.

They who own Mexico are the ones who want war.

Shall these powerful interests be permitted to succeed in their plot?

A CORRECTION

Berryville, Ark., July 1, 1916.

William J. Bryan, Editor Commoner: I note from the front page of the June number of The Commoner that you say, among other things in a signed statement, that the republican nominee for president, Charles E. Hughes, "was the only governor who asked a legislature to refuse to ratify the income tax amendment to the constitution."

I credit you with making an unintentional mistake. Since you are regarded as not only the best authority in the democratic party today, but also the most potent authority, I desire to call your attention to the fact that Governor George W. Donaghey, the democratic governor of Arkansas, said in his message to the Thirty-eighth General Assembly in 1911: "I seriously question the move to levy a tax on the incomes of the citizens of this state for the support of the federal government. Such a move may be fraught with grave danger." (House Journal 1911, page 52.)

Upon this recommendation the democratic legislature, there being only six republicans in it, defeated the ratification of the amendment in the early part of the session.

United States Senator James P. Clark was later invited to address a joint session of the senate and house and he strongly urged the legislature to reconsider its action in defeating the amendment, which was accordingly done and the amendment passed by a large vote. This was near the last days of the regular session. During the interim between the regular session and the extraordinary session, Governor Donaghey, believing that he had a right to veto the ratification, did so.

Upon the reassembling of the legislature a few days thereafter this writer introduced in the house a concurrent resolution, declaring that the governor had no authority to veto such a measure; that in truth and fact the amendment had been ratified by the Arkansas legislature in the way and manner prescribed by the federal constitution. (See House Journal 1911, page 56, Extraordinary Session.)

A few days thereafter Congressman Joe T. Robertson, now United States senator, introduced a like measure in the national congress, whereby it was declared that the Arkansas legislature had ratified the income tax amendment. Thus Arkansas was numbered among those states ratifying the amendment, notwithstanding the fact that her governor had not only warned the legislature against its passage, but had actually attempted to veto its ratification by the legislature. I make this statement not for the purpose of disparaging Governor Donaghey, for I believe him to be one of Arkansas' greatest governors, though as a member of the legislature I differed from him as to this particular question.

Again, I do not speak positively but I am morally certain that the democratic governor of Kentucky did the same things as Governor Donaghey respecting this amendment.

Knowing your sense of fairness, I trust you will give the same publicity to this letter as you did to your own statement, I am

Very respectfully yours,
ANDREW J. RUSSELL

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